

Message Text

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SUBJ: GREEK PARLIAMENT RELAUNCHED

1. SUMMARY: AFTER SEVEN-YEAR DORMANCY GREEK PARLIAMENT CONVENED DECEMBER 9, ELECTED PARLIAMENTARY OFFICIALS, AND LAID GROUNDWORK FOR REGULAR FUNCTIONING. PM CARAMANLIS WILL MAKE MAJOR POLICY ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT THIS EVENING TO WHICH LEADERS WILL RESPOND SUBSEQUENTLY. FORMER PM KANELLOPOULOS CONTINUES AS FRONTRUNNER IN SPECULATION ON PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT. END SUMMARY.

2. INITIAL SESSION OF GREEK PARLIAMENT DECEMBER 9 WAS PRIMARILY CEREMONIAL AFTER A 7 1/2 YEAR LAPSE. ARCHBISHOP SERAPHIM ADMINISTERED OATH OF OFFICE IN WHICH DEPUTIES PLEDGED LOYALTY TO COUNTRY AND CONSTITUTION. THREE MUSLIM DEPUTIES FROM THRACE WERE SWORN IN SEPARATELY TAKING OATH OF OFFICE ON KORAN. FOLLOWING OPENING CEREMONY PM CARAMANLIS IN CAUCUS WITH NEW DEMOCRACY'S 220 DEPUTIES TOLD THEM TO WORK DILIGENTLY IN ORDER TO LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS OF ELECTORATE WHO VOTED FOR THEM. PARLIAMENT MET AGAIN IN AFTERNOON AND ELECTED CONSTANTINE PAPACONSTANTINOU PRESIDENT OF PARLIAMENT AND SUBSEQUENTLY VOTED FOR THREE VICE PRESIDENTS GEORGE STAMATIS, ANTONIOS
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KONTOVRAKIS, AND GEORGE ANDREADIS. PARLIAMENTARY PRESIDENT

PAPACONSTANTINOU, WHO HAS BEEN A DEPUTY FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS AND IS CLOSE FRIEND OF PREMIER, WAS ELECTED IN NOVEMBER 17 BALLOTING NEW DEMOCRACY FIRST DEPUTY FROM CORINTH DISTRICT. VICE PRESIDENTS AS WELL AS OTHERS SELECTED BY ND CAUCUS FOR PRESIDUM POSITIONS--2 CARETAKERS AND FOUR SECRETARIES OF PARLIAMENT--ALL COME FROM RANKS OF MAJORITY PARTY.

3. PARLIAMENTARY PRESIDENT AS SPECIFIED BY PROCEDURAL RULES ALSO SELECTED MEMBERS FOR INITIAL PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF PARLIAMENT ARE: RULES AND PROCEDURES, BUDGET AND ACCOUNTING, AND LIBRARY. NEXT STEP IS ANNOUNCEMENT OF MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES WHICH DRAFT AND REVIEW LEGISLATION. COMMITTEES CORRESPOND TO NINETEEN MINISTRIES OF GOVERNMENT AND ARE FORMED ON BASIS ROUGHLY PROPORTIONATE TO PARTY STRENGTHS IN PARLIAMENT. ONE ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR NATIONAL FINANCE AND BUGETARY MATTERS DOES NOT HAVE CORRESPONDING MINISTRY. WHILE COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS ARE PRESCRIBED BY CONSTITUTION AND TRADITION, PARLIAMENTARY PRESIDENT PAPACONSTANTINOU MADE CLEAR IN OPENING SPEECH THAT PARLIAMENT REQUIRES MODERNIZATION, AND REVISIONS IN PROCEDURE AND STRUCTURE CAN BE EXPECTED. PAPACONSTANTINOU ALSO REFERRED TO POSSIBILITY OF REESTABLISHING SMALLER PARLIAMENTARY WORKING GROUP OF 60 DEPUTIES TO EXPEDITE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. (NOTE: WORKING GROUP WAS VITAL IN PAST YEARS TO ACT ON LEGISLATION SINCE REGULAR SESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT WERE OFTEN SPARSELY ATTENDED WITH ONLY HANDFUL OF DEPUTIES PRESENT, OR WHEN IN FULL BODY DEBATE WAS SOMETIMES SO RANCOROUS THAT LEGISLATIVE PROCESS CAME TO VIRTUAL HALT TO ALLOW TEMPERS TO COOL.)

4. FOLLOWING PAPACONSTANTINOU'S APPEAL FOR COOPERATION TO DEPUTIES, GEORGE MAVROS, CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES, MADE DEBUT AS LEADER OF OPPOSITION WITH TRIBUTE TO UNCROWNED DEMOCRACY AND SUGGESTION THAT IN FUTURE PARLIAMENTARY PRESIDENTS BE "INTERPARTY." MAVROS PROPOSED MOMENT OF SILENCE IN MEMORY OF DICTATORSHIP VICTIMS FOLLOWED BY BRIEF ADDRESSES BY DEPUTIES PAPANDREOU (PASOK) AND KIRKOS (KKE). PARLIAMENT CONTINUES REGULAR EVENING SESSIONS THIS WEEK WITH PM CARAMANLIS SCHEDULED ON DEC. 11 TO MAKE TRADITIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLICY STATEMENT, A DETAILED EXPOSITION OF GOG'S PGOGRAM IN ALL FIELDS. OPPOSITION LEADERS WILL THEN RESPOND TO GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT WHICH WILL CONSUME REMAINING SESSIONS THIS WEEK. NEXT ITEM OF PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS IS SELECTION OF PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC FOLLOWING RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT GHIZIKIS.

5. SPECULATION ON PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT REMAINS CENTERED

ON EX-PM KANELLOPOULOS, LAST PREMIER BEFORE APRIL 21, 1967 COUP. KANELLOPOULOS CONFERRED WITH PM CARAMANLIS DECEMBER 10 WHEN REPORTEDLY PM ASKED KANELLOPOULOS TO ACCEPT POSITION. ALLEGEDLY KANELLOPOULOS HAS SIGHTS SET ON BECOMING PERMANENT PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC AND SOUGHT ASSURANCES FROM CARAMANLIS THAT LATTER WAS NOT SEEKING PRESIDENCY HIMSELF. GOG HAS ISSUED NO OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON ITS PREFERENCE FOR CANDIDATE FOR PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT BUT ONLY OTHER NAMES MENTIONED WITH ANY FREQUENCY ARE EX-MINISTER OF CULTURE C. TSATSOS AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL OF STATE MICHAEL STASSINOPOULOS. MOREOVER MAVROS AND PAPANDREOU HAVE ANNOUNCED ALREADY THAT THEY INTEND TO GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO KANELLOPOULOS' CANDIDACY.

6. INTERESTING COMMENTARY ON CHARACTER OF PM CARAMANLIS IS FACT THAT HE ATTENDED DECEMBER 10 PARLIAMENTARY SESSION FOR ENTIRE THREE HOURS WITHOUT STIRRING FROM CHAIR. WHEN ASKED BY REPORTER WHY HE REMAINED MOTIONLESS FOR LONG SESSION WHILE OTHER MINISTERS AND DEPUTIES CAME AND WENT, CARAMANLIS IN STERN TONES REMARKED THAT HE KEPT HIS SEAT FOR ETHICAL AND PRACTICAL REASONS--ETHICAL TO SET GOOD EXAMPLE FOR NEW DEPUTIES AND PRACTICAL TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH FACES OF ALL DEPUTIES SINCE ON EACH ROLL CALL DEPUTY MUST STAND UP AND BE COUNTED. CARAMANLIS' FAITHFUL ATTENDANCE IS CLEARLY NOT RESULT OF SECRET ADMIRATION FOR THIS BODY WHERE HE HAS BEEN ELECTED CONSISTENTLY SINCE 1935. HE HAS INDICATED IN PAST HIS FRUSTRATION AND ANNOYANCE AT CUMBERSOME PROCEDURES OF PARLIAMENT OBSTRUCTING BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT. MEASURES TO REFORM PARLIAMENT AS PROPOSED BY CARAMANLIS ADMINISTRATION IN EARLY 1960'S WERE DIRECTED TOWARD MORE CLEARLY DILINEATING ROLE OF PARLIAMENT IN RELATION TO EXECUTIVE. GOG SOURCES REFUSE TO BE DRAWN OUT ON WHAT REFORMS ARE NOW BEING CONSIDERED; HOWEVER ONE OFFICIAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOURCE IS QUOTED AS SAYING CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS ARE BEING FORMULATED WHICH AIM AT "STRENGTHENING THE EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY WITHOUT REDUCING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE PARLIAMENT." THUS, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM COULD REPRESENT THE NEXT MAJOR HURDLE IN PARLIAMENT FOR CARAMANLIS WHO WITH AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN THAT BODY MAY NOW ANTICIPATE SUCCESS OF WHICH HE WAS DEPRIVED PREVIOUSLY IN SEEING HIS REFORM MEASURES ENACTED. STEARNS

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